

these problems. The administration has the ability to immediately take action to expedite American oil and gas development by clearing away the red-tape that companies are facing.

It is refusing to do so. Instead, President Biden seems ready to increase our reliance on energy imports from despotic governments in volatile areas of the world. That is not acceptable. Energy independence, relying on home-grown production instead of foreign energy sources, is key for a number of reasons.

For starters, energy security is national security. The more we rely on imports from other countries, the more that we are dependent on those countries. We have seen that during the current conflict in Ukraine. European companies like Germany have been unable to divest from Russian energy because they rely on that production.

Without Russian energy, more than one country in Europe would face a dire energy shortage—as Putin is well aware. We don't want to give another country that much power over us.

Energy independence, and the robust energy production that comes with it, also reduces the risk to Americans from price hikes in the global market. The more oil and gas the United States produces as a share of the global market, the more we are able to influence global supply, which is the leading driver of cost.

The Biden administration has not been good for American energy independence. We have increased our reliance on foreign sources of energy during this administration, including our reliance on Russian energy production.

And now that we have banned Russian energy imports, President Biden seems ready to replace Russian energy, not with increased American production but with oil and gas from human rights-challenged countries like Venezuela.

I realize that President Biden and many Democrats would like to see the United States focus solely on alternative energy production, but the fact of the matter is that we are a long way from being able to rely exclusively on alternative energy technologies. Whether Democrats like it or not, our country is going to need oil and natural gas for quite a while yet, and all of Democrats' wishful thinking isn't going to change that.

The answer is not to get that oil and natural gas from despots in volatile areas of the world but to get it from American energy production.

President Biden and his administration may not be solely to blame for high gas prices, but they have the power. They have the power to help lower energy prices by unleashing American energy production—all of it, both alternative and conventional—and they are responsible for their failure to do so.

We need an “all of the above” energy policy that embraces everything from oil and gas to hydroelectric and nu-

clear, to solar and wind. And when it comes to alternative energy production, we need to invest in all proven clean energy technologies, not just the administration's preferred technologies like electric vehicles. The administration has neglected important clean energy technologies like biofuels, which have demonstrated significant emissions reductions versus conventional gasoline.

As a resident of a rural state, I would like to see the administration get serious about leveraging agriculture as an energy solution and work to expand biofuel production and consumption. This means not only setting robust blending targets and rejecting specious small refinery exemptions but approving advanced fuels from corn kernel fiber and restoring the year-round sale of E15.

Last week, I led a letter to the President with the Democratic whip and colleagues from both parties urging the President to enable E15 to be sold during the upcoming travel season to provide Americans with a lower cost fuel that would help displace Russian oil.

Yesterday, the President's Press Secretary said that “E15 was on the menu.” Well, it deserves real consideration. American drivers can't afford for the President not to take action. The President could get us on a path to lower energy prices today—today—by announcing that his administration will get serious about expediting American production of oil and natural gas. If he fails to do so, then he really will be responsible for the prices that Americans are facing at the pump and for the hit that our national security will take from our increasing reliance on foreign sources of energy.

I hope the President will decide to unleash American production and put our Nation on a path to long-term energy independence.

I yield the floor.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BALDWIN). Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 682, Ruth Bermudez Montenegro, of California, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of California.

Charles E. Schumer, Richard J. Durbin, Gary C. Peters, Edward J. Markey, Ben Ray Lujan, Martin Heinrich, Tammy Baldwin, Jacky Rosen, Jeff Merkley, Raphael G. Warnock, Michael F. Bennet, Tammy Duckworth, Angus S. King, Jr., Alex Padilla, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Margaret Wood Hassan, Patrick J. Leahy.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Ruth Bermudez Montenegro, of California, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of California, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Hampshire (Mrs. SHAHEEN) is necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote or change their vote?

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 57, nays 42, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 84 Ex.]

YEAS—57

Baldwin	Heinrich	Peters
Bennet	Hickenlooper	Reed
Blumenthal	Hirono	Rosen
Booker	Kaine	Rounds
Brown	Kelly	Sanders
Cantwell	King	Schatz
Cardin	Klobuchar	Schumer
Carper	Leahy	Sinema
Casey	Lujan	Smith
Collins	Manchin	Stabenow
Coons	Markey	Tester
Cortez Masto	McConnell	Tillis
Duckworth	Menendez	Van Hollen
Durbin	Merkley	Warner
Feinstein	Murkowski	Warnock
Gillibrand	Murphy	Warren
Graham	Murray	Whitehouse
Grassley	Ossoff	Wyden
Hassan	Padilla	Young

NAYS—42

Barrasso	Ernst	Paul
Blackburn	Fischer	Portman
Blunt	Hagerty	Risch
Boozman	Hawley	Romney
Braun	Hoeven	Rubio
Burr	Hyde-Smith	Sasse
Capito	Inhofe	Scott (FL)
Cassidy	Johnson	Scott (SC)
Cornyn	Kennedy	Shelby
Cotton	Lankford	Sullivan
Cramer	Lee	Thune
Crapo	Lummis	Toomey
Cruz	Marshall	Tuberville
Daines	Moran	Wicker

NOT VOTING—1

Shaheen

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 57, the nays are 42.

The motion is agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Ruth Bermudez Montenegro, of California, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of California.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The bill clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 678, Victoria Marie Calvert, of Georgia, to be United

States District Judge for the Northern District of Georgia.

Charles E. Schumer, Brian Schatz, Jack Reed, Angus S. King, Jr., Elizabeth Warren, Chris Van Hollen, Raphael G. Warnock, Jacky Rosen, Tim Kaine, Patty Murray, Margaret Wood Hassan, Tammy Duckworth, Alex Padilla, Tammy Baldwin, Mazie Hirono, Christopher A. Coons, Patrick J. Leahy.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Victoria Marie Calvert, of Georgia, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of Georgia, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Hampshire (Mrs. SHAHEEN) is necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Ohio (Mr. PORTMAN).

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 52, nays 46, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 85 Ex.]

YEAS—52

Baldwin	Heinrich	Peters
Bennet	Hickenlooper	Reed
Blumenthal	Hirono	Rosen
Booker	Kaine	Sanders
Brown	Kelly	Schatz
Cantwell	King	Schumer
Cardin	Klobuchar	Sinema
Carper	Leahy	Smith
Casey	Lujan	Stabenow
Collins	Manchin	Tester
Coons	Markey	Van Hollen
Cortez Masto	Menendez	Warner
Duckworth	Merkley	Warnock
Durbin	Murkowski	Warren
Feinstein	Murphy	Whitehouse
Gillibrand	Murray	Wyden
Graham	Ossoff	
Hassan	Padilla	

NAYS—46

Barrasso	Grassley	Romney
Blackburn	Hagerty	Rounds
Blunt	Hawley	Rubio
Boozman	Hoeven	Sasse
Braun	Hyde-Smith	Scott (FL)
Burr	Inhofe	Scott (SC)
Capito	Johnson	Shelby
Cassidy	Kennedy	Sullivan
Cornyn	Lankford	Thune
Cotton	Lee	Tillis
Cramer	Lummis	Toomey
Crapo	Marshall	Tuberville
Cruz	McConnell	Wicker
Daines	Moran	Young
Ernst	Paul	
Fischer	Risch	

NOT VOTING—2

Portman
Shaheen

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HICKENLOOPER). On this vote, the yeas are 52, the nays are 46.

The motion is agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Victoria Marie Calvert, of Georgia, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of Georgia.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding rule XXII, at 6:30 p.m. tonight, the Senate vote on the cloture motions with respect to Executive Calendar Nos. 683, 737, 679, 680, 681, 684, 685 and 662; that at 11:45 a.m. tomorrow, March 17, the Senate vote on confirmation of Executive Calendar Nos. 656 and 738; that at 1:45 p.m. tomorrow, the Senate vote on the cloture motion with respect to Executive Calendar No. 677; finally, that if cloture is invoked on any of the nominations, all postcloture time be considered expired and the Senate vote on confirmation of the nominations at a time to be determined by the majority leader or his designee following consultation with the Republican leader.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I rise today to seek unanimous consent to confirm four nominees to posts that are critical—critical—to our response to Putin's war against Ukraine.

Through smoke and rubble and artillery fire, Ukrainians are leaving their homes with nothing more than a backpack, nothing more than their children in their hands.

Over the past 20 days, Vladimir Putin's illegal and horrific assault on Ukraine has led more than 3 million refugees to flee into neighboring countries. Those who remain are suffering from a dire and deteriorating humanitarian situation.

With Putin's army blocking aid convoys, millions of Ukrainians are facing lack of water, food, and heat. Meanwhile, Putin orders unprovoked, unjustified attacks on civilians—shelling apartment buildings, bombing maternity hospitals, and destroying kindergartens, committing atrocities throughout the country.

The United States and the world have a duty to exact costs on Putin, to demand accountability for war crimes, and to provide aid for the millions of innocent Ukrainians who are suffering. If we want to rise to this challenge, if we want to respond to the mounting human suffering, one thing is clear: We need to have the people in place—the people the President has selected—to lead and carry out this work. Their leadership is critical in our response to the growing crisis in Ukraine and the looming refugee crisis across Eastern Europe. They will fight to defend human rights when they are violated. They will fight to defend democracy when it is attacked. They will make sure we maximize the pain and the price Putin pays for this heinous war.

NOMINATION OF JAMES C. O'BRIEN

Mr. President, that is why we must confirm Jim O'Brien. He is the Presi-

dent's nominee for Coordinator for Sanctions. This is our most significant tool against Putin and his regime—sanctions. He is the President's nominee for Coordinator for Sanctions. Once confirmed, he will enhance the Biden administration's efforts with our allies and partners to impose devastating costs on Russia.

To date, more than 30 nations have joined this cause. Countries have stepped up that we never would have expected. But the fight is not over. We have to keep up the pressure. We must keep up coordination. And we must ensure that we are implementing and enforcing sanctions in concert with dozens of countries around the globe.

Now, I know my Republican colleagues agree that this must be a top priority. I have heard it on the Foreign Relations Committee: We need to do more sanctions. I have heard it on the Senate floor. I have heard it in the conversations with my colleagues: We need to do even more. I know they want our sanctions to be as effective as possible, so to them, I say: Confirm Jim O'Brien today.

NOMINATION OF JULIETA VALLS NOYES

Mr. President, now I can also give you 3 million reasons why we must confirm Julieta Valls Noyes, the nominee to be the Assistant Secretary for the Bureau for Population, Refugees, and Migration—because 3 million people have already fled their homes in Ukraine; 3 million people have left a war-torn country with their dreams shattered, their children traumatized—3 million people who have no idea what the future holds. Even as I speak, that number has surely been surpassed.

There is a reason we have the Population, Refugees, and Migration Bureau. There is a reason the President selects a qualified nominee to lead it. Ms. Noyes is that person. It is a travesty that Ms. Noyes's nomination has been languishing on the Senate floor for 148 days because of Republican holds.

We need a Senate-confirmed leader in place to take charge of the U.S. response to the refugee crisis forming in Europe, as well as the crises that already exist around the world. We need someone to work alongside our European allies as they face the fastest growing refugee crisis in Europe since World War II. We need her confirmed today—not tomorrow, not next week, today.

NOMINATION OF ERIN ELIZABETH MCKEE

Mr. President, the humanitarian crisis inside Ukraine is worsening every day. We can all see it for ourselves. You can see the images of Mariupol, where more than 200,000 civilians remain under siege, cut off from food, fighting for their lives. You can see the frightened faces of children crossing the border into Poland, carrying only a teddy bear and a change of clothes. This is a trauma they will struggle with for the rest of their lives.

So it baffles me that we would wait another hour, let alone another day, to